

March 17, 2010

Good afternoon,

My name is Kevin Brace and I am the Chairperson of the Correctional Staff Health and Safety Sub-Committee. I am a Correctional Officer at Northern Correctional with over 15 years of service. I am submitting this testimony not as Sub-Committee Chair, but as a victim of a deadly assault by an inmate.

I am submitting my testimony for Raised Bill No. 457 *AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION*.

July 8<sup>th</sup> 2009 was the worst day of my life and one that I will never forget. It started out like any other normal day. My work day started at 6:45am at Northern Correctional Institute in Somers, Ct. I walked into the housing unit, the same housing unit I have been working in for months. My supervisor and I (along with a video recording officer) walked into the inmate's cell to remove him from in-cell restraints. I have done this a million times in my 15 year career. I walked over to the inmate who was sitting on his bunk (like he is supposed to). The inmate started to rise, and I was about to remind him that he was supposed remain seated. The inmate with out any warning spat in my face. His saliva went into my eyes and mouth. A struggle ensued because the inmate was thrashing and attempting to bite. Three co-workers and I were exposed to this inmate's blood. This assault was the kind of "Pearl Harbor" type of assault that has been happening to Correctional Staff for the past 7 years across the state. This inmate has exposed other Correctional Staff and inmates to HIV by spitting on them in the past.

After the assault, I and the others who were exposed to blood received 5 star medical attention from the nurses and medical support staff who work at Northern. I can't thank them enough. I made the decision to take the anti-HIV medication. The side effects were horrible, nausea, diarrhea, and headaches. Maalox was

my best friend. These side effects lasted 35 days. The cost of my medication was \$1,700.

I was transported to Johnson Memorial Hospital for blood work. The Medical staff was excellent there also. While I was there the Connecticut State Police took my statement.

That was the first time in my life that I have ever brought the job home to my family. I was nervous about hugging my kids. My daughter who was 14 months old and I had the nightly tradition of sharing my dessert. That tradition ceased until my last blood test 2 months ago. I felt like I needed to be extra careful around my boys, rough housing and physical contact was suspended until I felt comfortable with my HIV status. Three days after my assault my wife and I had plans to go on a cruise to Canada to celebrate 10 years of marriage. Neither of us really felt like going. We went and the side effects from the Anti HIV medication was so horrible, I could tell you where every public bathroom is in Canada.

When I spoke with the Tolland County Prosecutor, we agreed that he would ask for 4 years. The judge offered the inmate 3 years. The inmate felt he should only have to do 6 months and refused the judges offer. Now I will have to go through a trial in order to obtain justice. Helping me navigate this legal nightmare was Merit Lajoie and Mary Kozicki from the Office of the Victim Advocate. Their support through this whole ordeal has been immeasurable, and I can't express my gratitude enough at all of the hard work they have done on my behalf.

By voting Raised Bill No. 457 out of Committee it is my hope that trials might be avoided, and inmates might think twice before assaulting Correctional Staff.

My advice to my fellow Correctional Staff, "Hug your kids, and your spouses everyday, you'll never know when you won't be able to".